

In regard to the transition to digital television:

I will state that I work in the broadcast industry at a station which has been transmitting digitally for over a year. I am also a consumer who wants to be able to continue to have the choice to watch television over the air without having to pay subscription fees to either cable or satellite providers.

I have personally purchased 3 different models of home receiving equipment, it truly amazes me how anyone can say that 2006 could be a reasonable cutoff date for analog television nationwide, as there is no consistency in the goods that the Consumer Electronics Manufacturers are providing for consumers to try to receive the digital signals with. The analog equipment is far more reliable at this point in time. Hopefully the manufacturers will someday be able to make their digital receivers become as reliable at picking up signals from digital stations as the current analog products are, but strongly feel that the consumers are being forced to finance a transition which is too premature for all but the most affluent markets.

The nation would be far better served to pick some specific markets in which to turn off analog services by a specific date, and see how the consumers in those specific markets react after the analog signals are turned off and they are left only digital off air signals to try to receive. Definitely the poorer social classes and elderly will be the most economically adversely affected unless there is some funding scheme found to assist them in their equipment purchases.

Definitely there should be strict receiver performance standards that rate each manufacturers model offered for sale, with a clear definition of what type of performance may be expected, in language that is consistent for all manufacturers. The mass merchandisers use of part time unknowledgeable sales staff is also a great hindrance to consumers trying to purchase equipment, many that I have talked with simply make up anything to make their sales commission, as there is certainly no single source of information to consult to learn what the real details of consumer equipment are.

There are many rural areas where there is no economically compelling reason to demand immediate turn off of analog. Obviously in more affluent markets where there is more demand for the spectrum to be made available, there are compelling reasons to reduce the spectrum and market same to other users. A compromise solution should be considered that would do just the major markets at a specific date, followed by medium sized markets at a later date and lastly small market operations. In the meantime to recover spectrum faster, the small market operations could be allowed to keep only either an analog or a digital station during that last part of the transition, and do a hard cutover at the later date.

Secondly, it is disturbing that it has taken so long after this transition began before manufacturers have even tried to improve the quality of receiving equipment for home use in the respect of ease of use for non-technically oriented people. One of the original tests done by the Sarnoff labs staff was to peak up the receiving antenna on an analog transmitter, locking it in place, shut down and

convert that transmitter to digital, and turn back on in digital, this was a very inappropriate test in relation to the real world where consumers will have a less than perfectly peaked receiving antenna and want to be able to receive multiple stations.

Thirdly, it is very disappointing that EAS was not standardized at the very beginning of this transition so that all manufacturers products would have a clearly defined manner in which to respond to incoming emergency information. Even now, the FCC should consider a stricter ruling for the response of home equipment to EAS transmissions, and make them be part of any hard transition cut-off date, even if that requires the manufacturers to make add-on boxes or modules to be supplied to equipment which has already been sold.

Everyone should know that the EAS signal is only as good as its weakest link, and every part of the system (including broadcasters) can benefit from improvement, but especially there has to be one consistent mode for home equipment to respond in.

These are my personal opinions and concerns

Sincerely,

Rick Thomas